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# Nature, Man and the Young Reader

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NATURE, MAN AND THE YOUNG READER

by

Jane E. Miller

Candidate for the Master of Fine Arts in  
the College of Fine and Applied Arts of the  
Rochester Institute of Technology

Advisor

Mr. Norman Bate

May 25, 1966

Volume I

I want to express my sincere appreciation to all those who assisted me in this project. I especially want to thank Mr. Norman Bate who endured, with monumental patience, our many meetings because he understood how sincerely motivated I was in this endeavor.

9/16/66

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To have ideas is to gather flowers;  
to think, is to weave them into garlands.

Avoir des idées c'est cueillir des fleurs;  
penser, c'est les tresser en guirlandes.

MADAME SWETCHINE



Children have not yet suffered the overdevelopment of the various machines of the mind. Drawings on cave walls in the childhood of time caught the simple reality of primeval life because of an intense closeness to nature.

Leonard Weisgard

## INTRODUCTION

No sooner did man begin to observe and meditate upon the wonder and mystery of nature and life, than he began to tell his own tales, myths, legends and hero tales...the art of story telling and the art of drawing to illustrate the story have always stimulated each other.<sup>1</sup>

The forces of nature appeared overwhelming to primitive man and incited an irrational obeisance. Using his cognitive powers, man learned to control this "despotic giant" and to utilize its natural resources to expand his own world. Gradually his affinity for nature changed to ignorant and wanton abuse and finally to desecration.

Conservation programs have been devised to protect not only nature's resources but their vanishing beauty. The prevailing attitude today is to divorce oneself from the problem and to depend upon the few to arrive at a solution. Each individual is responsible for resolving the problem. Modern man can no longer isolate himself from the natural world. He must be reunited with nature or he will destroy the very means of his own existence.

Our hope lies with stimulating the child's interest and retaining this interest throughout adulthood. Appreciation for nature and its natural order is fundamental and should be nurtured

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1. Mahony, Bertha E.; Latimer, Louise P.; and Folmsbee, Beulah; Illustrators of Children's Books, 1744 to 1945, Boston: The Horn Book Inc., 1947, p. xiii.

in the child's mind. Adults fail to realize the wonderment the world of nature holds for the child who has a natural kinship for living things.

Children have an instinctive curiosity about nature and an insatiable desire to learn. They are not normally aware of relationships in nature and regard each phenomenon as an entity. As an adult, I have been genuinely motivated to create a book for the young reader (7 to 9 years) showing the similarities between natural objects and human constructions. It is my desire to create an aesthetic and educational children's book based on some of man's developments and their relationship to nature. Hopefully, the book will develop the child's natural curiosity about nature and its relationship with himself.

The natural world remains the common basis for all of us, even though it is changed beyond recognition from the world of nature known to our fathers.<sup>2</sup>

Books for children should display a profound sensitivity to the enigma of universal life and help to develop a respect for it. These are the impressionable years.

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2. Kepes, Gyorgy, The New Landscape in Art and Science, Chicago: Theobald and Company, 1956, p. 20.

## TITLE PAGE

## TITLE

NATURE, MAN AND THE YOUNG READER

Thesis Proposal for the Master of Fine Arts  
College of Fine and Applied Arts  
Rochester Institute of Technology

Submitted by: Jane E. Miller

Date: April 30, 1965

Advisor:

Approved by Graduate Committee:

Date:

Chairman:

5/18/65



## I. PURPOSE OF THE THESIS:

The purpose of this thesis is to create an aesthetic and educational children's book, based on some of man's developments and their relationship to nature.

The book will be directed toward both informing the elementary level reader, age group 7 to 9 years, and developing his natural curiosity about nature and its relationship with himself.

## II. SCOPE OF THE THESIS:

A study will be made of the various illustrative and literary styles along with an exploration of natural forms.

Contacts with eminent authorities will be made on the preparation of children's books to obtain information pertinent to the field of writing and illustrating.

With the use of this material, a book will be originated that has both visual appeal and instructive information comprehensible to the elementary level reader.

## III. PROCEDURE:

Illustrative and literary techniques used in a variety of children's books will be examined to aid in planning a visually effective and educational presentation. Observations of natural forms will be made and the finding will be incorporated into the text and illustrations.

Combining this information with that compiled from eminent authorities, a book will be created that could stimulate the young reader to explore further natural phenomena.

## IV. ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS:

A. The effect of nature on man through the seasons of the year and his adaptation to it.

B. Utilizing elementary art work for visual display.

A good children's book is one that will be appreciated at all ages. No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally (and often more) worth reading at the age of fifty.....

C. S. Lewis

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Ever since man was capable of recording events, there has been some form of book. The first stories of man were seen and heard and felt with the simple intensity of children. Prior to the printed word, man's communication was accomplished mostly through pictures.

In the beginning, pictures were created purely for their aesthetic value. Paleolithic man recognized a communicative value in his pictorial efforts. A picture was developed into a symbol representative of that particular object. Out of this evolved a need to represent thoughts more concisely. A single symbol was created for a single sound and the outgrowth of this was the alphabet. With the communion of words and pictures, man was able to communicate even more effectively.

Until the development of the printing press, in the fifteenth century, books were executed by hand. Beautiful illuminated pictures accompanied the text which was published exclusively for adults. Childhood needs were ignored and books were riches not included among a child's possessions. Children were regarded as a totally different species--the life of the child was considered a preparation for adulthood. There were those adults, however, who disagreed with this general philosophy.

In the seventeenth century it was Bishop Comenius (1592 to 1670) who was primarily instrumental in presenting knowledge

in an attractive manner to young readers. His Latin textbooks included illustrations. He claimed that;

pictures are the most intelligible books that children can look upon.<sup>3</sup>

Even before the time of Bishop Comensius, illustrated textbooks were available to children. Two examples of these are Aesop's Fables (1484) and Der Ritter Vom Turn (Switzerland, 1493). The existence of other children's texts before this time is very probable but is not substantiated.

During the eighteenth century, chapbooks were fashionable. Gory historical events were printed on cheap paper and peddled through the streets of England. Though originally intended for adults, children soon acquired these books as they did many of the great classical books including Gulliver's Travels, Robinson Crusoe, and pilgrim's progress.

The hornbook and the battledore were two other forms of books popular during this century. Technically the hornbook was not a book but rather a lesson sheet mounted on a wooden paddle. It invariably contained the alphabet and a prayer. The battledore was derived from the hornbook and was constructed of lightweight cardboard which was compact when folded. Neither the hornbook

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3. Pitz, Henry C., Illustrating Children's Books, New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1963, p. 19.

nor the battledore retained the child's interest. As a result, he still resorted to adult books.

Many of the books of this period written for children were overly concerned with educating the child. Every hour of the child's day was devoted to educational projects. Even "play time" included practical learning situations. The Puritans fearing for the morals of the child, oppressed them even further. The books which they published for children always contained a "God fearing" message.

Children's books were designed to the liking of the adult until the middle of the eighteenth century. At the sign of the Bible and Sun in London, John Newbery established a publishing firm. For the first time, fictional books were printed exclusively for children. The status of children's books was improved with the use of better quality paper, bindings, and with the addition of gilt edge pictures. There were others that shared this accomplishment with Newbery, but he remains a landmark in the art. Little Goodie Two Shoes written by Oliver Goldsmith and published by Newbery is still cherished today as one of the first real children's stories because of its natural humor and its perfect harmony of text and illustrations.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, both authors and illustrators were finally producing work expressly for

children. Although fairy tales first appeared in 1698, Charles Perrault, earlier in 1757, established the trend. He was the first author to appeal directly to the inventive mind of the child. Some of these fairy tales were so elegantly illustrated that for a time they were considered more for the sophisticated adult than for the ingenuous child. Paul Hazard considers Hans Christian Anderson to be the "prince" of all-story writers, bringing in all of the pageantry of the universe.

Anderson is unique in his capacity for entering into the very soul of beings and things. He tries to find the individual soul of each subject.<sup>4</sup>

In 1767, Thomas Bewick (1753-1827) was considered to be the first great illustrator of children's books. He was later surpassed by William Blake (1757-1827). Blake illustrated, wrote the text, and completed the entire process of printing, binding, and publishing his books. His Songs of Innocence (1788) was natural and free from literary devices.

Blake had no descendants in a direct line, yet perhaps his belief in the importance of childhood, may have been the forerunner of the interest in the child for himself--not merely as a prospective adult--and of the effort to understand children, which were to characterize the century to come.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Hazard, Paul, Books, Children and Men, Boston: The Horn Book Inc., 1944, p. 97.
  5. Mahony, op. cit., p. 24.

At the close of the eighteenth century there was a brief lapse into the "age of reason". The child's imagination was again thwarted and his wishes ignored. Charles and Mary Lamb renewed the interest in the child with their Adventures of Ulysses and Tales From Shakespeare. The Grimm brothers were compiling simple folktales from German peasants. These were translated into english by Edgar Taylor and illustrated by George Cruikshank. Edward Lear's Book of Knowledge was also published at this time.

Artists like George Cruikshank (1792-1880), Richard Doyle (1824-1883), and John Leech (1817-1864) were appealing to the anxious world of the child with their humorous illustrations. Cruikshank's folktale illustrations possessed a magical quality. Richard Doyle depicted the fairy world. He also designed the cover of Punch in 1849 which is still used today. John Leech was not as technically proficient as his colleagues but his illustrations contained a certain vitality.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the English and the Americans had accepted children as children. The "golden age of literature" was flourishing. Charles Kingsley's Water Babies (1863), though written with a moral purpose, still remained imaginative.

Kenneth Grahame wrote *Wind in the Willows* (1908) exclusively for children.

One does not argue about the Wind in the Willows...the book is a test of character. We can not criticize it because it's criticizing us.<sup>6</sup>

Lewis Carroll influenced the whole idea of writing for children with his *Alice in Wonderland* (1865). It is interesting to note that he made many of his own illustrations but that those of John Tenniel, with their harmonious relationship to the text, remain those most closely associated with this work. "Alice without Tenniel, is to many, no longer Alice".<sup>7</sup>

The trend during this era included the retelling of Greek legends and epics (Hawthorne's Wonder Book); purely imaginative stories (Carroll's Alice in Wonderland); collections of folk and fairy tales (Grimm brothers and Hans Christain Anderson); interest in stories of everyday boyhood and girlhood (Alcott's Little Women and Twain's Tom Sawyer); the interest in historical events (Twain's *The prince and the Pauper*) and finally some for purely adventurous interest (Stevenson's Treasure Island, and Verne's Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea). Jungle Book by Kipling was the only book of its kind that opened the field of animal life and character to children. At this time the illustrator's name began to appear on the title page with that of the author.

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6. Wallace, Robert, "Kids Books; A Happy Few Amid the Junk", Life Magazine, Vol. 57, No. 24, December 11, 1964, p. 112.
  7. Meigs, Cornelia; Eaton, Anne; Nesbitt, Elizabeth; and Viguers, Ruth Hall, A Critical History of Children's Literature, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1953, 247.



The stature of the children's book illustrator had finally reached that of the author.

There was a group called "Illustrators of the Sixties" which was less concerned with the child than was the group of the seventies which included Walter Crane (1845-1915), Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886), and Kate Greenaway (1846-1886). Theirs was a world of charm and lightness in contrast to the imposing sixties.

Walter Crane, whose strong interest in design, planned an interrelation between illustration and text and was the first of the modern illustrators to put this into effect. In his book, The First of May he even hand lettered the text to harmonize with his delicate illustrations. Randolph Caldecott was considered among artists to be the best of the trio, with his illustrations projecting a vitality that was achieved with an economy of line. Kate Greenaway's style which was beautifully quaint had an understanding of the spirit of childhood which was reminiscent of her own childhood. Her reputation surpassed that of Caldecott's and Crane's even though her ability to draw was not as masterly as that of her colleagues.

The development of the children's book was not solely an English one, inasmuch as the need for children's books was

being recognized and fulfilled throughout Europe. Even in purile America, books for children had become fashionable. Howard Pyle (1853-1911), displaying a unity of illustration and text in his own work, taught and inspired young American illustrators. There is still evidence of his influence in today's illustrations.

Although Americans were influenced by the old world, they created a style spiced with the flavor of the American scene. With the transition from woodblock printing to photoengraving, many more illustrators were attracted to this art. Beatrix Potter (1866-1943) took advantage of the full color process of photoengraving with her water color illustrations. She possessed an intimate knowledge of the world of nature and transposed this knowledge into the visual language of the child. By the twentieth century, the world of children's books had been permanently established. In 1893, the first children's room was included in the Pratt Free Library with Anne Carroll Moore as its librarian. Horn Book was published exclusively as a children's guide to literature. Children's book week was inaugurated in 1918. Medals were being awarded to superior literature and art work, the Caldecott Medal for the outstanding picture book and the Newbery Award for distinguished writing. Every other year the American

Institute of Graphic Arts (A.I.G.A.) presents an exhibition of the "Fifty Books of the Year".

There were no really important picture books published in the first seven years of the twentieth century with the exception of C. B. Falls' A B C Book. This book was significant in its use of large areas of flat color with a heavy black outline, producing a new effect.

World War I interrupted the flow of illustrative material temporarily and post war years experienced a revival of the art. A younger generation was now entering the field. There was still much to be desired concerning the book as a unit, but with the combined efforts of author, illustrator, publisher, and printer, a definite harmony was being achieved rapidly. Even the practice of printing the story on a textured paper foreign to that used for illustrations was eventually discontinued.

Offset lithography was now making it possible for larger editions to be printed at a lower cost. Foreign artists were also contributing to the growth of the children's book market not only in volume, but in format. These foreign illustrators had discovered opportunities in America which they did not find in their own countries. The D'Aulaires, the Provensens, Gustaf Tenggren, Feodor Rojankovsky, Roger Duvosin, and Nicholas

Mordvinoff are among the many who contributed a wealth of fresh style and talent hitherto unknown to the American children's book industry.

Those involved in the creating of children's books were experimenting with books of varying sizes, shapes, textures, and arrangements. Critics refer to this era of experimentation as an age of mediocrity. Experimentation in the field of science is accepted automatically and its inclusion is unquestioned in the role of progress. The public has still not accepted the fact that art must also experiment in order to progress. With the exception of the expected novelty book, illustration for children has finally reached a maturity. Today's book illustrations have reached the status of an art form requiring the same skill and understanding which are prerequisites of other established art forms.





Childhood and genius have the same  
master-organ in common — inquisitiveness.

L'enfance et le génie ont en commun  
le même mobile — la curiosité.

E. G. BULWER-LYTTON

I like books that remain faithful to the very essence of art; namely, those that offer to children an intuitive and direct way of knowledge, a simple beauty capable of being perceived immediately, arousing in their souls a vibration which will endure all their lives.

Paul Hazard



## THE AUTHOR-ILLUSTRATOR

The desirability of obtaining unity of text and illustration stimulated the artist to compose his own text. Beatrix Potter, Howard Pyle, and William Blake were among the few who initiated the concept of author-illustrator. Although it wasn't until 1928 that the pattern became crystalized with the creation of Millions of Cats by Wanda Gag.

At this time it was still a little heretical for an artist whose reputation was grounded in what the critics call one of the "fine arts" to work seriously and without pretentious apology in the field of illustration. Wanda Gag became quite a regenerative force in the field of children's books published in the U.S. from the year 1928.<sup>8</sup>

Wanda Gag examined the work of great artists such as Delacroix, Renoir, Van Gogh, and Cezanne extensively--finding Cezanne the greatest source of inspiration to her. Other illustrators were equally influenced by Picasso, Kandinsky, Mondrian, and Vlaminck. Ludwig Bemelmans reflected the style of Raoul Dufy in the Madeline series using the same airy, somewhat hurried but confident, approach.

Other well known author-illustrators and contemporaries of Wanda Gag included Lynd Ward and Robert Lawson. Robert Lawson received the Caldecott Medal for his book, They Were Strong and Good, in 1941. He felt that the adult should rise to the children's level because the child is much less limited in his tastes and

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8. Meigs, Cornelia; Eaton, Anne; Nesbitt, Elizabeth; and Viguers, Ruth, A Critical History of Children's Literature, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1953, p. 584.

understandings than the prejudiced adult. In 1953, Lynd Ward received the same award for his book, The Biggest Bear, which was his first book as both illustrator and author. Previous to his debut as a children's book author, most of his writing had been limited to magazine articles.

In 1932, the immortal elephant Babar was created by the author and illustrator, Jean de Brunhoff. He invented stories for his own children which involved elephants. Noticing his children's engrossment in his narrations, de Brunhoff decided to record his impressions and illustrate them. It is believed among some librarians that children prefer to have Babar read to them. The text is printed in cursive style which children are not introduced to formally until they are eight or nine years of age. Nevertheless, children have enjoyed de Brunhoff's stories imaginative stories for 30 years. These stories have often been referred to by critics as "distinguished nonsense".

In the latter half of the thirties, Edward Ardizzone's Little Tim series became popular on both sides of the Atlantic.

.....an English artist in the direct tradition of Criukshank. He is a real illustrator with the ability to set a scene with only the slightest resource to period props.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Gill, Boo, and Lewis, John, Illustration: aspects and directions, New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1964, p. 85.



Fritz Eichenberg succinctly describes the atmosphere of Ardizzone's books.

The Tim books smell of fog and salt and ocean tang, and the reproduction of the fine watercolor is about perfect.<sup>10</sup>

At this time, H.A. Rey introduced Curious George using strong color, vivid action, and irregular vignetting to attain a dramatic effect. Children are caught up in the excitement produced by the illustrations and words that are filled with animation and sound.

If there existed an award for the master of nonsense, it would undoubtedly be presented to Dr. Seuss for his incomparable stories and illustration. Dr. Seuss first introduced his strange world of people, animals, and ideas to children in 1938. Although it has been suggested that children are more attracted to multi-colored illustrations, Dr. Seuss has been successful in stimulating their imaginations with an economy of line and color.

In the forties, Robert McCloskey and Virginia Lee Burton were equally successful in their contrasting approaches depicting the American scene. McCloskey's Make Way for Ducklings (Caldecott Medal, 1942) has long been a favorite among children. To insure the reader a sense of authenticity, Mr. McCloskey

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10. Eichenberg, Fritz, "The European Picture Book", Illustrators of Children's Books, Boston: The Horn Book, 1958, p. 53.

provided a home for four live ducks in his studio; studying their actions and habits at considerable length.

No effort is too great to find out as much as possible about the things you are drawing.<sup>11</sup>

Virginia Lee Burton derived many of her ideas from those things directly surrounding her. Her theme for The Little House (Caldecott Medal, 1943) was conceived and stimulated by the moving of her own home to the country. The book possesses a quality of unity in illustrations, text, and decorations. Even the placement of the text follows the direction of the road to further embody the words with the illustrations. Her own children were a source of inspiration to her in imagining, planning, and producing her ideas. As her children matured, she lost her immediate audience and the desire to write for young readers. She now concerns herself with illustrating the books of other authors.

Another successful author-illustrator of this generation is Roger Duvoisin, who believes that the child's viewpoint can be understood and appreciated by the adult through his own observation and memory.

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11. McCloskey, Robert, "Ducklings at Home and Abroad", Caldecott Medal Books, 1938-1957, Miller, Mahony, and Field; Editors, Boston: Horn Book Inc., 1957, p. 84.

The vividness of Duvosin's childhood memories are without question one of the greatest, if not the greatest, factor in making him a highly successful children's illustrator. He has the ability to enter into a mood, absorb it, and give it expression.<sup>12</sup>

In his acceptance speech in 1950 for the Caldecott Medal awarded his book, Song of the Swallows, Leo Politi states;

I compose a book very much as if I were making a piece of sculpture. First I put down the bulk. When I feel the bulk has body and the right proportions, I begin to work on the details. I work with the pictures and text at the same time and make one supplement the other.<sup>13</sup>

Much of Mr. Politi's work is influenced by trips to Mexico and Central America and by his present surroundings on a colorful Mexican street in Los Angeles.

Just as Leo Politi was influenced by his environs, Katherine Milhouse was by hers. Her Pennsylvania Dutch background is obviously reflected in her book The Egg Tree (Caldecott Medal, 1951) which is an Easter story with its setting in the Pennsylvania Dutch area.

The 1950's also brought the renewal of the woodblock. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this was almost the only means by which illustrations could be reproduced. This, of course, limited artists as to their choice of media.

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12. Waugh, Dorothy, "Roger Duvoisin as Illustrator for Children", Caldecott Medal Books, 1938-1957, Miller, Mahony, and Field; Editors, Boston: Horn Book Inc., 1957, p. 182.
  13. Politi, Leo, "Miracles in Olvera street", Caldecott Medal Books, 1938-1957, Miller, Mahony, and Field; Editors, Boston: Horn Book Inc., 1957, p. 202.

There are those illustrators today who prefer the woodblock for the results it achieves that are unique only to wood.

Antonio Frasconi has attained a well deserved prominence in this medium, which he was instrumental in reviving. In his woodcut The snow and the Sun,

.....one feels the snow, the sun, the wind, the walls,  
in bold illustration befitting a bold text.<sup>14</sup>

Another advocate of the woodblock, Evaline Ness, attributes the variety of effects she obtains, to experimenting with different kinds of wood. In her book, Josefina February, she has captured the warmth of the Tahiti atmosphere. After living several months among the people of Taniti, she believed that she had absorbed its climate, culture, and the characteristics of the natives. This was necessary in order to delineate Tahiti visually and verbally as authentically as possible.

Barbara Cooney, another supporter of this philosophy, lived in France for the length of time required to sketch the people, their buildings, and the scenery. These were faithfully reproduced in the book, Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes in French, (translation by Hugh Latham), a work respected by teachers of French. Her illustrations are an individual interpretation of authentic

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14. Durham, Mae J., "Some Thoughts About Picture Books", Horn Book Magazine, Vol. XXXIX, No. 5, Oct., 1963, p. 481.

settings; not a photographic facsimile.

In 1956, typography was uniquely employed by William Wondriska to express sound in his book, The Sound of Things, which was one of A.I.G.A.'s "Fifty Books of the Year" for that year.

At the close of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties, several commercial artists were beginning to permeate the field of children's book illustration. Their use of flat and limited color in combination with simplified images influenced the style of many illustrators. Some illustrators simplified their art forms even to a greater degree to capture purposely the child's primitive approach to representing objects.

Paul Rand, one of the most prominent of the commercial designers at present, has greatly influenced the trend of illustration with the simple dynamic images that he has used to captivate the consumer world. It is because of this reputation that he is included among the author-illustrator group. His wife, Ann Rand, is responsible for the text of many of the books. His Sparkle and Spin is often compared to Kaminsky's Nine Points of Ascendance. In another one of Mr. Rand's books, I Know a Lot of Things, double page spreads are united by the use of color and dot design, alternating

with white. The concluding words of the story act as the body of the little boy whose hat is red and yellow and shoes are red and black.

Other immigrants to the children's book world from the world of commercial art include Leo Lionni, Celestino Piatti and Ezra Jack Keats. Leo Lionni, once the art director for Fortune magazine, stated that he does not illustrate particularly for children but rather for that part of him that has remained childlike.

Among the many varied things I have done in my life, few have given me more and greater satisfaction than my children's books. For an artist to work for others means compromise which, however reasonable they may be, often leave the initial edge marred, transformed, devitalized.<sup>15</sup>

Although Lionni has not purposely tried to appeal to a particular age group, his publishers have categorized his books in the 3 to 6 years age bracket. His animals as well as inanimate objects take on the human we can identify ourselves with.

It is important that children be encouraged to identify, to find themselves in others.<sup>16</sup>

Ezra Jack Keats, a poster artist and magazine illustrator, was awarded the Caldecott Medal for his book, The Snowy Day. It is reminiscent of all those things a little boy enjoys doing

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15. Lionni, Leo, "My Books for Children", Wilson Library Bulletin, Bronx, New York, Vol. 39, No. 2, Oct., 1964, p. 142.

16. Ibid., p. 144.

when the first snow falls. People and objects are represented so simply, but so convincingly, that one becomes an integral part of the story. Color and patterns are used effectively to create varying moods. Whistle for Willie also displays simple forms, but more brilliant colors that are appropriately selected for the story. Keats developed both his stories around a little Negro boy. There is a vast neglect among authors and illustrators to present the social realities to children, namely poverty and prejudice. There are a few publishers who are breaking away from the traditional idealism. In The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes, poverty is handled delicately. In The Dead Bird by Margaret Wise Brown and The Big Wave by Pearl S. Buck, the inevitability of death occurs. Arna Bontemps is concerned with the racial problem in the Story of the Negro.

Another noted poster artist, Celestino Piatti, has been represented since 1951 in every exhibition of Swiss posters in Europe, the United States, Canada, Japan, South Africa, and Australia.

There is a definite association between his poster art and the illustrations that appear in his recent book, The Owls. Children are attracted to the dynamic illustrations, but are bewildered by the text with its seemingly adult message.

Although Maurice Sendak does not represent the commercial art world, he is another successful children's book illustrator at this time along with Miroslav Sasek and Bruno Munari.

Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Beasts Are is quite an original approach to a topic that still remains intriguing to children today. The plot revolves around a little boy who has been rebuked for a few misdeeds and is sent to his room whereupon he encounters a fictitious jungle of wild beasts.

Miroslav Sasek has a series of books illustrating important cities throughout the world and relates facts about them in an interesting manner. His first book, This is Paris, was published in 1959. Together with their definite educational value, each book proposes to capture those characteristics that are unique to each city. Humor is artfully incorporated within the text and illustrations. An example of this can be found in the opening pages of This is London where the viewer is confronted with a solid area of one color--"pea soup" green, with the underlying text, "Well, this is London."

The office of Children's Services of the New York Public Library selected Bruno Munari's A B C book as one of the outstanding picture books published in the last thirty years. One of the juror's comments, representing the A.I.G.A., referred



to it as "beautiful design, style, and elegance from the jacket right through to the last page."

This represents only a few of those concerned with both the art of illustrating and writing. There has been an ever increasing trend for the illustrator to compose his own text as he discovers the satisfaction in writing and illustrating one's own words. The problem of achieving an effective communication with the child, verbally as well as visually, is ever prevalent. No one can be certain what illustrations and manuscript will succeed with children. One thing is certain however; the contribution of the illustrations is absolutely essential to complementing the words in a picture book. The children's book is an art form that not only absorbs the influences of time and cultures, but in turn is influential.

Words and pictures are one of the most predominant forces in the continuous development of the young mind toward adulthood stature. It is this stature that the author-illustrator can ostensibly generate within the child. The book challenges the artist's fullest creative powers and the author-artist challenges the intellect and imagination of the child.





The world of reality has its limits;  
the world of imagination is boundless . . .

Le monde réel a ses bornes,  
le monde imaginaire est infini . . .

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU



We must write for children out of those elements in our own imagination which we share with children.

C. S. Lewis

## WRITING FOR THE YOUNG READER

Basically there exists two types of books; the storybook which relates a story, and the book of knowledge which imparts information. We are primarily concerned here with a book of knowledge with emphasis on the illustrations and with a limited text written purposely for the young reader. The book's message would be even more effective if read by an adult to the child.

Accuracy of information is essential, particularly in a book of knowledge. Children are unhesitating in their ability to detect misinformation and will just as readily abandon those books which misrepresent facts. Accompanying illustrations must also be explanatory and lucid. A good writer possesses a thorough understanding of his subject matter and the faculty for arousing interest in his subject; satisfying this interest and extending it. The unknown things surrounding the child will naturally instill a curiosity within him that needs to be fulfilled. It is important that these factual books be represented as what they are; not camouflaged under the guise of recreation.

Every children's book should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. A child should be conscious of a theme developing throughout the book; one that is interlaced within the structure naturally; capturing and retaining the reader's interest. A theme, if forced, is ineffective.

The action is of primary importance when beginning a children's book. Children are attracted to a theme that has liveliness and originality presented in a simple, direct manner. Since the child's attention span is brief, the stories action should begin immediately, avoiding wordiness. Older children are capable of editing superfluous words or passages. Younger children become impatient and will abandon books filled with extraneous verbiage. Descriptive words, repetition of words, and rhythmic patterns are influencing factors needed to capture and retain the child's interest.

The author should be basically concerned with a need for his book; what the child wants to know and what he is capable of comprehending at various age levels. The sensitive author writes about the child's interests and within his language of understanding; never condescending to the mind of the child.

Nothing seems to me more fatal for this art, than the idea that whatever we share with children is in a private sense "childish", and what ever is childish is somehow comic. We must meet children as equals in that area of our nature where we are their equals. The child as reader is neither to be patronized nor idolized.<sup>17</sup>

The child's level of understanding is greater than his ability to express himself because children lack the vocabulary that corresponds to their reasoning power. Clarity in expressing

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17. Lewis, C. S., "On Three Ways of Writing for Children", Horn Book, Vol. XXXIX, No. 5, October, 1963, p. 469.

ideas combined with variety are additional characteristics essential to establishing an effective communication with the child.

Even a simple elementary presentation of a subject that has interest for quite young children can awaken curiosity and suggest extension of knowledge through books beyond the one the child is immediately reading.<sup>18</sup>

Foremost, the author's genuine interest in his subject will invariably be transmitted to the child.

Children, normally, anticipate and want a moral at the conclusion of the book--truth and justice must triumph. Most story books and some books of knowledge include a moral because of an inherent need for one, not because the author thinks that one is necessary. A moral must seriously concern the author or it will ring hollow in the ears of the young reader. Sometimes a moral is included that is perplexing and inappropriate. An example of this is Celestino Piatti's, The Owls where children are intrigued by his powerful bold drawings but are confused by its adult message.

In addition to appealing to the child's needs and desires, the author is obligated to comply with the publisher's requirements. Too many publishers are overly concerned with categorizing children's books into concise age groups.

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18. Smith, Lillian, The Unreluctant Years, Chicago: American Library Association, 1953, p. 180.

No reader worth his salt, trots along in obedience  
to a timetable.<sup>19</sup>

Children progress in reading at different levels and are inclined to overlap in either direction. There is little value in a system that does not advocate a rational flexibility. Limiting vocabulary lists adjusted to different age levels are issued by librarians for the author's use. Most authors disregard these lists; refusing to be bound by a predetermined vocabulary that does not adequately express his ideas.

Our little girl, six, likes all sorts of words, long and short, easy and hard. We think the vogue for planned vocabulary will be short lived.

As adults, we can too easily underestimate the child's aptitude for acquiring new words. The written word is a new mode of expression for the child and despite a natural tendency to cling to the familiar, there is a greater propensity for discovering the unfamiliar.

The market today for children's books is more extensive in volume and variety than it ever has been. In conjunction with this trend, the cheap novelty book has evolved solely for profit, not for merit. Adults are inclined to purchase the novelty book because of its low cost and because of their lack of understanding in appraising children's literature. Those

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19. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 469.

20. provensen, Alice and Martin, author's questionnaire, July, 1965.

books of real value are most often purchased by librarians who are specially trained in evaluating children's literature. The Newbery award is presented annually to the author of the best children's book based upon literary merit. The books are judged by a group of librarians. The judges selection does not always agree with the children's evaluation or sentiments. The book, Charlotte's Web, which did not receive the Newbery award in 1953 has endeared itself to children and has become a classic in the field.

It has, however, become the responsibility of the librarians to select and order quality books and to cultivate a genuine interest in the child for books. Children are incapable of analyzing a book's value. They are intrinsically drawn to certain books but lack the ability to reason why these books appeal to them. Unlike most adults, children are unaware of the power and beauty that words contain, but they do sense this power and beauty. If consistently exposed to books of excellence, the child is more likely to acquire and eventually develop a taste for them and the ability to appraise what he reads.

Children vary in their preferences for books but within the variety of choices there are common underlying factors which determine the quality of the book.



The qualities which are basic in good writing are literary values; that is they do not concern the subject matter so much as how it is presented. The subject matter of a book may be eminently sensible, and the presentation of it pre-eminently dull. In other cases, the subject matter may be nonsense, yet the presentation of it suggests profound truths.<sup>21</sup>

The literary quality of a book is greatly determined by the author's ideas, structure, and his style or ability to express his ideas. An author's ideas should be original, which means that they are written in an individual, fresh, and independent way. These ideas, which form the structure of the book, come from within him and find their origin in the truth. Every author has his personal style to express what he wants to say. There is no absolute formula by which we can measure a book's quality. The real classics in literature have universal appeal and have remained permanently significant to the reader long after the books initial excursion into the literary world. Writing for children is an art. The author is contributing to the child's intellectual and spiritual growth which are the essence of maturity.

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21. Smith, op. cit., p. 35.





The plays of natural lively children are the infancy of art.

Les jeux des enfants d'un naturel vif sont le premier âge de l'art.

ADAM GOTTLÖB OEHLenschLAGER



.....books that provide children with the kind of pictures they like; picture chosen from the riches of the whole world; enchanting pictures that bring release and joy, happiness gained before reality closes in upon them, insurance against the time, all too soon, when there will be nothing but reality.

Paul Hazard

## THE PICTURE BOOK AND CHILDREN'S EXPECTATIONS

Normally a child's visual sense is his most keenly developed sense. In his literal approach to the picture book, the child expects the picture to relate a story and will accept an illustration on this basis. Pictures perform a lively role and provide the real meaning to the words. Almost always these pictures are inseparable from the text.

A genre in which the textual story is fully developed, but the pictures are so important, one can hardly imagine the story without them.<sup>22</sup>

This is in contrast to the illustrated book where the pictures are an extension of the text.

New words are acquired through the association with the pictures and this union of words and pictures is paramount in stimulating the child's imagination and developing his mind. Once a child becomes accustomed to the text and pictures, he will begin to absorb the book's aesthetic value through proper guidance. Good taste is not inherent, it must be acquired and developed.

These books can be an initial excursion into the world of genuine art.<sup>23</sup>

The illustrator must be capable of visualizing the world of the child through the child's eyes which is accomplished

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22. Miller, Bertha Mahony, and Field, Elinore Whitney, Editors, Caldecott Medal Books, 1938 to 1957, Boston: Horn Book Incorporated, 1957, p. 310.
  23. Durham, Mae J., "Some Thoughts About Picture Books", Horn Book, Vol. XXXIX, No. 5, October, 1963, p. 476.

through his own observation, experience, and imagination. When the author recreates authentically his own childhood experiences and interests, they may be recounted fictionally but in a mature way not beyond the understanding of the child. Although a child should be approached simply and directly, oversimplification will ultimately result in a prosaic work. The initial general impression the child receives is significant in captivating the child's interest. The young reader is attracted to a book that is colorful, imaginatively presented, and one where the text is cohesive with the illustrations. Placement of the illustrations should be arranged to avoid an accumulation in one area, thus providing a rhythmical pattern that flows along naturally. Children prefer pictures to be on the same page or facing the part of the story that is being illustrated. The apprehension about the unknown or unseen, sustains the young reader's interest. They are looking for adventure and want to be able to enter into the picture as though they were a living part of them.

After the initial impression, the child will begin to concentrate more intently upon details. Virginia Lee Burton, in the process of creating The Little House, noticed her own child's absorption with one particular scene. The scene was one crowded with buildings and vehicles. One of the cars displayed

a flat tire. This miniscule detail captured the child's interest and amused him thoroughly. We all (adult and child) are attracted to those details that hold a particular fascination for us as an individual.

It has been suggested that very young children love small detail and that this does not change as they grow older, but many fine old poets also love and use small detail.<sup>24</sup>

Ludwig Bemelmans' Madeline books tell the story of twelve little girls, their governess, and their adventures in Paris. In one scene, all twelve girls were illustrated although Madeline, one of the twelve, was hospitalized. Many children detected this error immediately and hurriedly wrote to Mr. Bemelmans about the confusion. The young child characteristically focuses his attention on those things he is beginning to learn about and objects of interest to him. He is unaware of the vastness of the world of knowledge but as he develops, he becomes aware of his world expanding around him. Details lose their importance unless applied to a definite area of interest to the individual.

Children's books must contain the same human and aesthetic elements that appeal to adults, but these elements must be selected from the children's world.<sup>25</sup>

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24. Weisgard, Leonard, author's questionnaire, July, 1965.

25. Miller, op. cit., p. 90.

Children's illustrators must concern themselves in drawing for children and not for the adult's amusement.

Children enjoy many styles of painting and drawing but generally prefer color as opposed to black and white. If color is omitted in illustrations, the story must have a strength that will compensate for this lack of color. This theory can be applied to Robert McCloskey's powerful story, Make Way for Ducklings. This story does not rely upon color in its illustrations which are convincingly interpreted from a duck's eye view. Color can also be an asset to the illustrator in conveying a variety of moods. Fantasy is artfully and uniquely separated from reality through color and line by Maurice Sendak in A Very Special House in which reality is represented by color and fantasy by line. Use of negative space can also be instrumental in developing moods ranging from loneliness to warm companionship.

The well advised illustrator and author refers to the classics in children's literature and illustration studying the reasons for their perennial appeal. These books possess a quality of genuineness and their creators have an inherent ability to remain childlike. Competition in this field has produced many novelty books which lack this quality. Books of this type ignore the very essence for which a children's book is created--the child.

There are critics that fail to recognize the real value of illustrations for children's books. David Fletcher compares the artist's illustrations to a candy wrapper--an enticement that is unrelated and unnecessary. He contends that the illustration has a threefold function.

First, to adorn the package and attract the reader to the book. Second, to provoke the anticipation and to get the child reading. And third, to be used only in books that require it, to set the scene and help the imagination to picture correctly when lack of knowledge would otherwise make this impossible. Here strict accuracy is the criterion.<sup>26</sup>

If accuracy is the ultimate criterion here, then photography should replace illustration. Fletcher maintains that the child (9 to 14 years) is capable of conceiving his own images and prefers to do so.

Barbara Cooney, a prominent and exceptionally fine children's illustrator, responded to Mr. Fletcher's article as follows:

Decoration is the first function of the illustration. A second function that it often performs is that of elucidating or interpreting the text. A distinction must be made between mere pictorial representation or instruction and interpretation. Furthermore, while decoration does nothing more than decorate, elucidation must decorate as well as elucidate.<sup>27</sup>

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26. Fletcher, David, "Pictures on Paper", The Horn Book, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, February, 1961, p. 25.
27. Cooney, Barbara, "An Illustrator's Viewpoint", The Horn Book, Vol. XXXVII, No. 1, February, 1961, p. 27.



The illustrated book is not a necessity, but;

.....how satisfying it is to see with one's eyes, to feel with one's hands, a book that is illustrated and printed well.<sup>28</sup>

An author then, should concern himself with procuring a competent artist who familiarizes himself with the script.

Children are certainly capable of conceiving their own images; but the artist's illustration can provide the incentive for the child to see beyond this immediate visual interpretation and enter into the very soul of the book. How stifling it would become to the imagination if we were content with only our conceptions and only our interpretation of these conceptions. A character's image and the story's mood is created through the artist. The illustrator is close to being a story teller. He usually visualizes the complete story before he draws his first picture. Good illustration can develop a sense of composition, perspective, and color usage within the child through repeated exposure to these elements.

Mae J. Durham believes that the three essential component parts of the genuine picture book are:

.....substance in text, aesthetic interpretation through illustration and harmonious book design.<sup>29</sup>

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28. Cooney, op. cit., p. 27.  
 29. Durham, op. cit., p. 480.

The picture book is truly an art form, not just a commercial enterprise. The creative artist or illustrator has the ability to make us see and understand. A picture book fills a need for retaining the child's interest in books before he masters reading, theoretically between the ages of 9 and 10.

There are also those illustrators that firmly believe that since each idea is unique, so must the illustration be unique to conform with different ideas. Marcia Brown and Leo Lionni are two noted advocates of this philosophy.

One needs only to look at books illustrated by Marcia Brown to observe her versatility in using varying techniques appropriate to the story. Most of her books illustrate this principle--Cinderella done in an ethereal style is in strong contrast to Felice produced in bold splashing color. She believes that this art must have integrity and the ability to think, see, feel, and live in order to be capable of interpreting each new idea in a new way.

Leo Lionni reveals a strong satisfaction in writing and illustrating children's books, but he believes that we tend to force things into a personal mold.

I find greater joy and satisfaction in developing a form for each idea. A formal independent style does not allow such complete identification; it does not permit each story, each character to live its own life. It dresses the actors with the same costume over and over again, no matter what their play is and no matter what their roles are.<sup>30</sup>

He feels that the meaning in the story must be subtle. Children automatically rebel against a demand. His book Inch by Inch is a profound example of subtlety. Mr. Lionni does not succumb to a particular pattern in creating a book. The text may follow the illustrations or precede them. His ultimate goal is in achieving a coherence between the form and content, the approach being secondary. Although diversified approaches do exist in creating a children's book, illustrators do agree upon the fundamental qualities previously cited.

In the past 30 years, the children's book artist has progressively gained prominence in the art world. Many commercial and fine artists have been attracted to this field and have derived great satisfaction from it. The influence of the commercial artist is especially evident in illustrative concepts today. The picture book has become a definite part of the children's world with the hope of its continuance in the future. Those books that children have endeared themselves to in the past have been

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30. Lionni, op. cit., p. 145.

inspired by a genuine interest on the part of the artist in his subject.

The illustrations are drawn with the artist's skill, but they are drawn as well from the artists heart that remembers a child's way of seeing, feeling, and enjoying a world that is to him new, wonderful and unexplained.<sup>31</sup>

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31. Smith, op. cit., p. 128.

A LIST OF THE BEST CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS PUBLISHED IN THE  
LAST 30 YEARS, COMPILED BY THE OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

- Bemelmans, Ludwig, Madeline, Viking, 1939.  
Bishop, Claire Huchet, Five Chinese Brothers, illustrated  
by Kurt Wiese, Coward-McCann, 1938.  
Brooke, Leslie, Johnny Crow's New Garden, Frederick Warne,  
1935.  
Burton, Virginia Lee, The Little House, Houghton Mifflin,  
1942.  
McCloskey, Robert, Make Way for Ducklings, Viking, 1941.  
Minarik, Else H., Little Bear, illustrated by Maurice  
Sendak, Harper & Row, 1957.  
Munari, Bruno, Bruno Munari's ABC, World, 1960.  
Rey, H. A., Curious George, Houghton Mifflin, 1941.  
Seuss, Dr., And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street,  
Vanguard, 1937.